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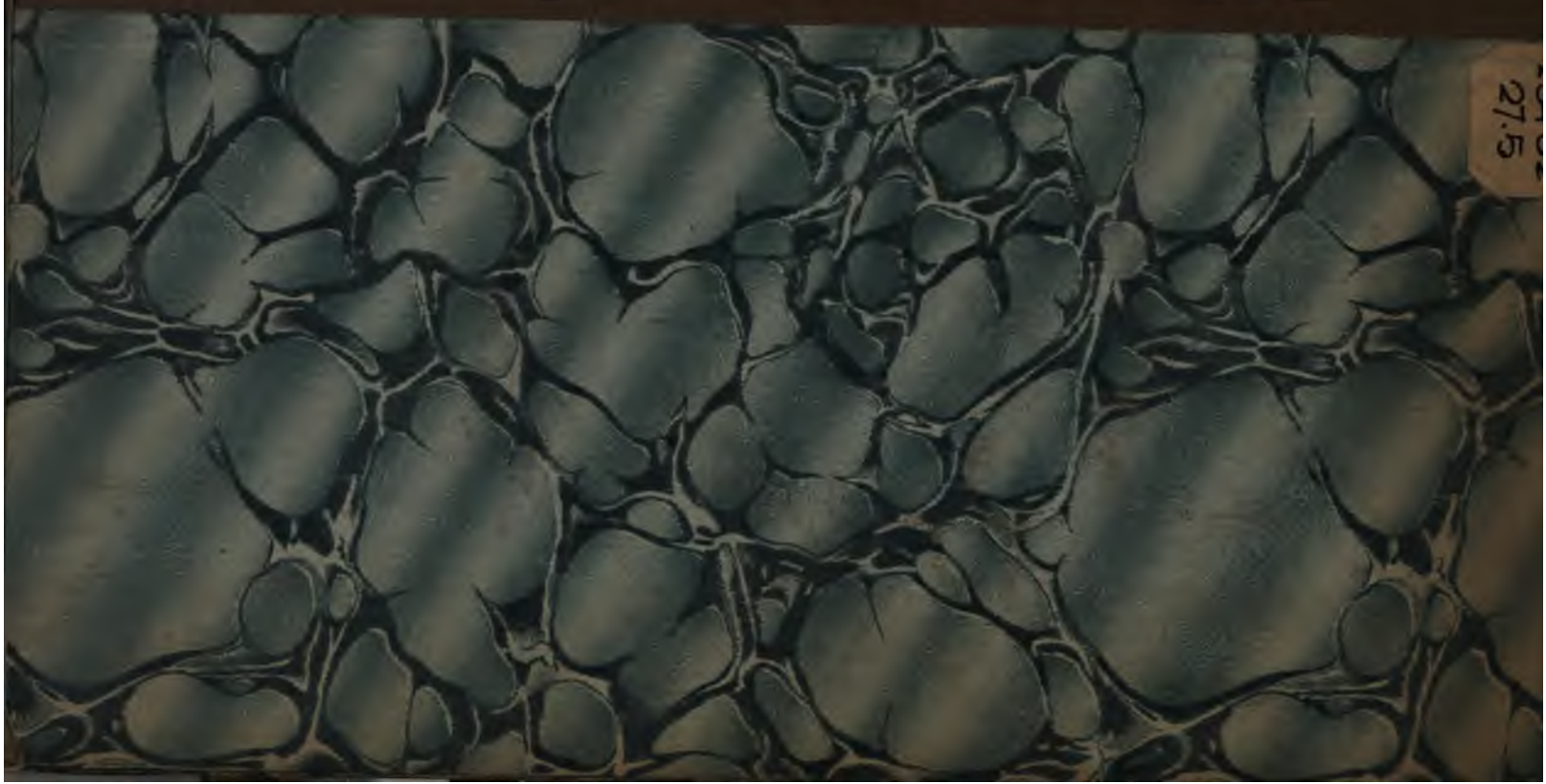
The Cambridge Dionysia - 1858



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THE

CAMBRIDGE DIONYSIA,

A CLASSIC DREAM.

BY THE EDITOR OF "THE BEAR."

"He who is offended at that which is kindly meant is doubly in the wrong. Firstly, he vexeth himself for no cause; and next, he imputeth a bad motive to him who never conceived it."—BACON'S ESSAYS.

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By Sir George Otto Trevelyan, Bart.

TRINITY COLLEGE, *November*, 1858.

I AM a junior Soph; a first class in our last May. Mathematics are my forte, and my friends tell me that Classics are my foible. However, I was considered a very neat scholar at Edinburgh. I cannot, perhaps, write Iambics like Harvey the Shrewsbury freshman, who is said to have translated the lines in Hamlet beginning "To be or not to be, that is the question" (we read them in our Shakspere society last Long) in the course of a single walk. Still, I beat all the Harrow men in the Euripides cram paper—and that is no trifle. This term I have been reading with Shillibere, very much against the advice of my tutor, who told me to stick to Mathematics. I do not like Shillibere; he snubs me on all occasions, and when I wished to learn something which would pay in the College examinations, he set me down to the Wasps of Aristophanes. On the first Audit day of this year he told me that as it was the *πιθουγία* he would excuse my reading with him, but bade me get up the subject of the Dionysia before our next meeting. That afternoon Jamie Drummond and I (Jamie was third in the Trigonometry paper) set out for our walk as early as a quarter after one, and came home famished. We managed to sit opposite a boiled turkey in hall, and contrived to secure the Audit bowl three times;

keeping it with us so long as to rouse the indignation of two Eton cricketing men, one of whom I heard call Jamie a damned red-headed Scotchman. After dinner we played whist in the lodgings of Shipton, the bachelor Scholar. The fourth man was Barlow, commonly called Billy, Shipton's fag at Rugby; a good-natured, clever, classical freshman: he is, however, rather fast, and rides out hunting with the drag foxhounds. I lost thirteen points, chiefly owing to Barlow, who would keep chattering about the respective merits of the ale at the different colleges, and calculating the chances of victory on the ensuing fifth of November. We left soon after eight, and then Barlow came to my rooms, and joined me in a glass of toddy. When he had gone I took down the Wasps, but somehow or other I could not make much of them. So I drew my easy-chair to the fire, filled my pipe, and opened Smith's Antiquities on the article "Dionysia." But the Greek words bothered me, and I was too lazy to rise for a Lexicon. So I fell a thinking on Athens, and what glorious fun the festival must have been. I can recollect nothing more till I found myself in the midst of a strange dream. And yet, marvellous as it was, nothing seemed to surprise me; but I took it for granted that everything was perfectly natural and consistent. And the dream was as follows:

I was still sitting in my rooms with my books before me: but it was broad daylight, and a lovely morning, such as sometimes breaks upon us, even at Cambridge, in the beginning of November. The courts were very quiet, but I heard a constant shouting in the distance, as if there was some tumult in the streets. Suddenly the door flung open, and Barlow appeared. He looked flushed and excited; on his head was a garland of ivy-leaves, and he swung in his

hand a pewter. "Shut up your books," he cried: "no reading on the *πιθοιγία*. If you do another equation I'll report you to the proctor *βασιλεύς* for impiety. The God, the jolly God, hates Colenso worse than he hated Pentheus. I've come to fetch you to the theatre, whether you will or no. There is a new comedy to be represented, and all the University will be there. By Hercules, I hope they'll hit the authorities hard. When the performance is over we sup with Rumbold of Caius, culinary Caius, the head-quarters of good living. I am king of the feast, and not a soul shall get off under three bottles. We have stolen the chaplets from the Botanical gardens; Ingrey sends the dessert, and Stratton has promised to bring two flute-players from Barn——. Here I started up, crying, "Barlow, lead on! I'm your man." And we danced out of the New Court gate, and up the lane into Trinity-street. And there was a sight that made my heart leap.

The whole road was crowded with men, all in the wildest state of joy and liquor. Every one acknowledged the presence of the God, to whom liberty and license are dear. Laughing, singing, cheering, jesting, they were pouring in an unbroken stream towards Magdalen-bridge. Gyps mingled with the throng, enjoying perfect freedom and equality on this day of the year. Ever and anon some fresh band of revellers issued from the colleges and lodging-houses on the way, and swelled the main flood. Here came a mob of Queens' men, sweeping the street, and roaring at the pitch of their voices, "For he's a jolly good fellow!" referring probably to the late senior wrangler. There, from the great gate of Harry the Eighth, streamed forth the whole club of Third Trinity. In front, arm-in-arm, strode the victorious four; while elevated on the shoulders of the crew of the second boat sat the secretary, his

temples crowned with roses, riding a huge barrel, and bearing in his hand a silver bowl foaming with cider-cup. As we passed All Saints'-passage, from the direction of the Hoop Inn there moved a goodly company, twenty-five or thirty in number, and my companion whispered me that this was the Historical Society, and bawled out to them to ask whether Elizabeth was justified in putting Mary to death. And behind them walked, with downcast eyes, three or four unhappy wretches, who, as my companion told me, were the lapsed members, who were cut off from all communion with their fellows. And those who passed by made not a little fun of the poor outcasts. And just inside the gateway of St. John's College, there was a group of young men who successively tried to dance on an inflated pigskin. And he who danced best received a draught of their ale. And presently there came by a drunken Trinity sizar, who, after a successful trial, took the flagon, but when he had tasted, he cursed, and spit, and swore no Trinity shoe-black would condescend to drink it. Upon which a stout Johnian kicked his shins, and, as it was evident that a row would ensue, and that we as men of the same College would be implicated in it, we hurried away, not wishing to desecrate the festival of the God by evil feelings. And on Magdalen-bridge was seated a knot of idle fellows who chaffed all the passers-by. And among others they told a solitary individual in a Downing-gown that he was so few that his College did not think it worth its while to brew for him, but had sent out for a gallon of swipes from the Eagle for his special consumption. So at last we arrived at the gate of the theatre, and after paying threepence each, which had been furnished us from the University Chest, we went in and sat down.

One side of the Castle-hill had been hollowed out into a

spacious amphitheatre. Tier above tier the long benches rose to the summit of the slope. In the front seats were the Vice-chancellor, and the heads of colleges, and doctors of divinity, and professors, and noblemen, and all who could claim founders' kin. And the rest of the space was filled to overflowing with undergraduates and bachelors. But all females were excluded from the spectacle. And the throng was very clamorous, and many were provided with oranges and nuts, and even stones, wherewith to pelt the unpopular actors. And in the orchestra was an altar, at which Shillibere stood, crowned with ivy, and robed in a long white robe. And from time to time he poured copious libations of ale upon the ground. And underneath the stage sat a white-headed man, bearing a lyre. And at this time the stage was veiled with a great curtain, embroidered with the loves and deeds of ancient and godlike men. And there I saw how the chosen heroes had launched a boat of pristine build, and ventured down the river in search of the Golden Fleece, where, as rumour said, the beer which the immortals drank was brewed. And I saw too how, as they passed along the black water, the first prow which had ploughed those waves, the men of Barnwell came down to the shore to wonder at the strange sight. And how, near the Stygian ferry, they came upon a fierce race, who seized their boat with long poles, and threw with unerring aim brickbats which ten bargemen of these degenerate days would in vain attempt to lift. And how, when at length they had found the Golden Fleece, their young chief was captured by the landlord and his friends, and locked up in darkness and solitude. But the black-haired daughter of the inn, who was cunning at medicating ales and knew the virtues of strychnine and all bitter herbs, was charmed with the flowing ringlets and easy tongue of the youth. And she stole the key from

her father while he was overcome with drink, and eloped to the boat with her new lover. All this I saw, and much more. And next me sat a staid bachelor, who seemed as if he had taken no part in the jollity of the morning. So we fell into conversation, and he told me how the theatre had been built under the inspection of Dr. Donaldson, from a comparison of plans furnished by freshmen in the Trinity College examinations. And he said that the festival of this year was jovial beyond any that had preceded it; for that the public mind had just recovered from the painful excitement caused by the mutilation of the statues on the roof of Trinity library: which act men had suspected to be part of a plot for overturning the constitution of the University, and delivering us over to the Commissioners. And that report said there would be two Choruses in this play. And that fourteen First Trinity jerseys had been ordered from Searle's, and one of great size for the Coryphæus. And he would have said more, but a tipsy Pembroke man bade him hold his tongue, or he would bring against him an action of *ἀσεβεία* at the next private business meeting in the Union, for disturbing the worship of the God. So we looked, and the curtain had already been drawn down. And the scene disclosed was in the old court of Trinity, letter Z, and two gyps were asleep outside the door; and the clock struck six, and one of them started up.

GYP A.—One, two, three, four, five, six! 'Tis plaguy hard
To keep us watching here the livelong night.
Williams, you dog! get up: you're not in bed.
GYP B.—Hallo! I do believe I've had a snooze. [*Yawns.*
I feel as if I was in Great St. Mary's.
GYP A.—Come, stir your stumps, and fetch a quart of bitter:
I know you have an order on the butteries,
And then I'll tell you what I dreamt to-night.

GYP B.—Bitter! 'Tis bitter cold for ale this morning.
Here, take a nip of this, and fire away. [*Hands him a flask.*

GYP B.—I seemed to sit within the famed Town-hall,
Watching the progress of the Bachelors' Ball.
There, gayest trifler in the throng of dancers,
Was C——n cutting figures in the Lancers.
And at my side the gallant Colonel Phipps,
His arms a-kimbo on his manly hips,
Said, while around he let his eye-glass range,
"C——n, methinks, has had a saving change!"

GYP B.—Well dreamt! But I have dreams as well as you.
Here's one as marvellous, and just as true.
I seemed to hear our Rhadamanthine mayor
Deal justice from the magisterial chair.
A Corpus sizar had been well-nigh slain
By fifteen blackguards in St. Botolph's lane:
The mayor approved his fellow-townsmen's pluck,
And fined the plaintiff two-pound-ten for luck.
As pensively he rubbed his broken head,
"Confound old Currier Balls!" the gownsman said.

GYP A.—Come now, I'll chat a little with the audience.
Our master here, who keeps in the top-story,
Honest Philoleon, for his first three years
Led a most quiet and gentlemanly life.
He was not gated more than twice a term;
He read three hours a day; rode every week;
Last year pulled seven in our second boat:
In all things 'moderation' was his motto.
And when he came home jolly in the evening,
"Jackson," he'd say, "take my new coat and keep it:
It's made so that no gentleman could wear it:"
Or, "Jackson, that last bottle of port was corked,
So drink my health in it." He ever was
The best and the most generous of masters.

But now he's gone stark mad; and you must guess
What sort his madness is. [*To the spectators.*
GYP B.—That Queens' man there
Says that he's bent on being senior wrangler.
GYP A.—No, no; he won't be old enough these ten years.
GYP B.—And that black-whiskered noisy party yonder,
Sitting amongst a group of Harrow freshmen,
Guesses he aims at office in the Union.
GYP. A.—What, to be called united and compact?
And to be chaffed in the suggestion-book?
Not quite so low as that. Come, try again.
D'ye give it up? Well, listen, and I'll tell you.
One Sunday evening last May term at tea
He met by chance a troop of roaring Lions,
And came back swearing he must join their number,
Or give up hopes of immortality.
From that day forth he ran about the college,
Talking of "Truth," and "Souls," and "Great Ideals;"
And asking men to give him a *ποῦ στῶ*;
And telling them he saw within their eyes
A bond of sympathy that made them brothers.
Then he cut dead a schoolfellow and friend
Whose name was Samson, because Samson slew
The lion in Gath; and seeing that his idol
Was bound in green, he went to Sunday chapel
In a green coat; and three times every day
He sent me posting off to Petty Cury,
Declaring he must use the Lion's tap
Or give up beer. In short, such pranks he played
We nigh engaged a cell at Cherryhinton.
So, in this state of things, his younger brother
Bdeluleon came up this term to College,
A sensible hot-headed Cheltenham freshman;
Who, when he saw his brother's strange distemper,
Blushed for himself and for the family.

And first he tried by pleasing the old fellow
To wean him from his hobby; taught him songs,
And took him out to supper: but whenever
His health was drunk, and he was asked to sing,
He spoke straight off a canto from "St. Clair;"
And then he dressed him in his best and washed him,
And got him made a member of the Musical:
But, at the first rehearsal, off he ran,
His fiddle on his back, and never halted
Till he was inside Palmer's Printing-office.
So, vexed and wearied at his constant folly,
The young one locked him up within his rooms.
But the old chap is sly, and full of tricks,
And loves his liberty.

[*Philoleon appears at the window.*

PHIL.—Hallo, you scoundrel!
Just let me out; 'tis time to go to Lectures.

GYP A.—Why, you're a questionist: you have no lectures.

[*Enter Bdeluleon.*

BDEL.—Was ever freshman plagued with such a brother?
What have I done that I deserve this evil?
I never was undutiful; I never
Have read a line of Alexander Smith;
Nor picked a pocket; nor worn peg-top trousers.
Fortune, who calls thee blind does not bely thee.

PHIL.—I want a supper-order from my tutor.

BEDL.—No, no, old boy, I took good care of that:
I got you an ægrotat. Sold again!
Where are you now? Good Heavens!

[*Philoleon puts his head out of the chimney.*

PHIL. I'm the smoke.

BDEL.—Confound the man who altered all our chimneys!
Jackson, run up, and beat him with the pewter
Till he backs water; then clap on a sack.

[*Philoleon reappears at the window.*

PHIL.—O Lord St. Clair, on bended knee
I charge you set the maiden free!
BDEL.—In mercy stop that nonsense quick:
Your Lion always makes me sick.
I feel as ill as when I tried
My first and only Smoker's Pride.
PHIL.—O may the curses of the Gods light on you!
And may you wallow in the lowest Hades,
Along with all the men who've struck their tutor,
Or laid against the boat-club of their College,
Or caught a crab just opposite the Plough:
In that sad place of punishment and woe,
Where lectures last from early dawn till noon,
And where the gate-fines rival those at Christ's,
And there's a change of Proctors every week!
Then you'll repent of having used me thus.
BDEL.—You blasphemous old scoundrel! Come, you fellows,
We all must need some coffee this cold morning.

[*Enter Chorus of writers of the "Lion," preceded by a chorister bearing a lantern.*

CHORUS A.—Rosy-fingered dawn is breaking o'er the fretted roof of King's.
Bright and frosty is the morning: sharp and clear each footfall rings.
Gyps across the court are hurrying with the early breads and butters.
Blithely hums the master's butler while he's taking down the shutters.
In our rooms we left the kettle gaily singing on the coals;
And within the grate are steaming eggs, and ham, and toast, and rolls.
Soon we'll have a jovial breakfast, with the members of our mess,
Chatting of our darling project, future hopes, and past success.
We have come to fetch our brother. What can cause his long delay?
It was not his wont to keep us shivering here the livelong day.
He was always sharp and sprightly when the "Lion" was in question;
Ever ready with an Essay; ever prompt with a suggestion.

Surely he must be offended
At our leaving out his poem:
Yet no insult was intended,
As our want of space must show him.
Or perchance he came home jolly,
Wishing to knock down the porter,
And lies cursing at his folly,
Panting for some soda-water.
Shew yourself upon the landing:
Hear your loved companions' groans:
For our feet are sore with standing
On the rugged Old Court stones.

[*Philoleon shows himself at the window.*

PHIL.—Comrades, when I heard your voices, how my heart within me leapt!
Thoughts of happier days came o'er my spirit, and I almost wept:
Those bright days when free and happy with some kindred soul I strayed,
Talking of objective functions up and down the chesnut glade.
Now a cruel younger brother keeps me under lock and key:
Those I hate are always by me; those I love I may not see.
O my own, my cherished Lion, object of my prayers and toil,
Would that I and thou were lying underneath the All Saints' soil!
Drop your voices, dear companions, lest you rouse a sleeping Bear.

CHORUS A.—Does he then despise our anger? All men know who ate Don't Care.
Never fear him. We'll protect you. Do not heed his threats and frowns.
Say your prayers, and jump down boldly. We will catch you in our gowns.

[*Philoleon places his leg over the window-sill, but is seized from behind by Bdeluleon.*]

BDEL.—Not so fast, you old deceiver! From your evil courses turn.

Never will I tamely let you join in such a vile concern.
Sooner than behold my brother sunk to such a depth of scorn,
Gladly would I bear to see him walking on a Sunday morn
'Twixt a pair of pupil-teachers, all the length of Jesus-lane,
With a school of dirty children slowly shambling in his train:
Or behold him in the Union, on the Presidential seat,
Shakspeare smiling blandly o'er him, freshmen ranting at his feet.
Get you gone, you pack of scoundrels! Don't stand bawling here all day.
Williams, fetch me out the slop-pail: Jackson, run for 20 K!

CHORUS A.—Slay the despot! Slay the tyrant! Him who cannot brook to see
All his neighbours dwelling round him peaceable, secure, and free.
Well I know you've long been plotting how to seize the Castle-hill
With a band of hired assassins, there to work your cruel will.
But you shall not go unpunished—no, I swear by Jove in heaven,
We will bind and hand you over to the merciless eleven.
Then we'll see if you continue to your purpose firm and fixed,
In the gloomy spinning-prison, when the hemlock-bowl is mixed.
Let the man who wrote the Syrens make a feint upon the door:
Bring up ladders, ropes, and axes; we must storm the second floor.

[*Enter Chorus of First Trinity men.*

CHORUS.—Here they are. Upon them boldly! Double quick across the grass!
Cut them off from Bishop's Hostel, lest along the wall they pass!
Forward, Darroch! Forward, Perring! Charge them, Lyle! And now remember
'Gainst what odds you fought and conquered on the fifth of last November:
When you broke with one brave comrade through an armed and murderous mob:
Fear not an æsthetic humbug, you who've faced a Cambridge snob.
Men of twelve stone, in the centre; coxswains, skirmish on the flank!
You're too eager there, you hoplites: Jones and Prickard, keep your rank!

Do not stay to spoil the fallen while a soul is left alive:
We must smoke them out and kill them, now we've caught them in the hive.

[*They charge the writers in the "Lion," who resist for some time; but on the death of E'Astes, the remainder fly in all directions.*]

Victory! Victory! now for a shout!
As when we bumped the Johnians out!
Vain was the might of Elective Affinities
When brought face to face with our valiant First Trinities.
Victory! Victory! Huzza! Tantivy!
For when an ass
In the lowest class
Talks of the pictured page of Livy,
'Tis time for every man of sense
To arm in honesty's defence,
As if the French were steaming over
In rams of iron from Brest to Dover.

[*Bdeluleon comes out leading Philoleon dressed in a First Trinity costume.*]

BDEL.—Thank you, my brave allies! And now to prove
The confidence I have in your discretion
I here entrust to you my elder brother,
To watch his morals, and to cure his madness.
So treat him kindly; put him in a tub,
And take him down the river every day;
And see that no one asks him out to supper,
To make him tipsy. Be not hard upon him,
But let him have his pipe and glass of sherry,
Since he is old and foolish. And if ever
He comes back sound in body and in mind,
I'll stand you claret at the next club-meeting.

[*Exit Bdeluleon.*

PARABASIS.

We wish to praise our poet, who despising fame and pelf
Flew like a bull-dog at the throat of the jagged toothed monster itself
Which rages over all the town, from Magdalene-bridge to Downing,
With the head of a lion, and feet of a goose, and the ears of Robert Browning.
But some of you good fellows think, as the poet grieves to hear,
That you are laughed at in "the Bears," the play he wrote last year:
So he assures you faithfully that no insult was intended.
Do not cherish bitter feelings; for, Least said is soonest mended.

And next he bids us tax our wit
To tell some members of the Pitt,
Whose names he knows not, when they meet
Him passing into Sidney-street,
Not to bawl out "The Bear, The Bear!"
First because he does not care:
Then surely for a man of taste,
It is a sin and shame to waste
In calling nicknames near the Hoop
The breath that's given to cool our soup.
So, being a good-tempered bard,
Whichever of them leaves his card
He'll ask him out next week to dine,
And shake hands o'er a glass of wine.

And now he bids you all good evening, and farewell till next October;
And hopes to-night you'll sup like princes, and that none will go home sober.
If policeman K arrests you, let not that your spirits damp:
Break his head, and shave his whiskers, and suspend him to the lamp. [*Exeunt.*

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